

Some Current Practices in English Instruction in Illinois Secondary Schools

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This study was undertaken in an effort to discover the answers to questions raised by administrators and teachers relative to prevailing practices in English instruction in secondary schools throughout the state.

Sources of the Data

The data presented in this report were obtained by three methods: (1) questionnaires sent to principals and teachers of English in all accredited public high schools in Illinois; (2) examination of the records of the High School Visitor's office; and (3) visits to 25 high schools in every part of the State. Special thanks are due to Dr. A. W. Clevenger, of the University of Illinois, who extended every courtesy in making the Visitor's records available for the study.

Of a total of 712 high schools receiving the questionnaire, responses were received from 228. The geographical distribution of the responses corresponded closely, in each enrolment category, to that of the total number of high schools addressed. A total of 942 Illinois teachers of English responded to the questionnaire.

Table I. PERCENT OF SCHOOLS RESPONDING

Enrolment	Number of Schools Addressed	Number of Schools Responding	Per Cent of Total Responding
1-200	526	119	22.6
201-500	136	55	40.4
501-1000	59	20	33.9
1001-2000	51	25	49
2001 and over	40	9	22.5
All Schools	712	228	32

It is difficult to say with certainty to what extent the responses represent a valid sampling of the schools and teachers in the state. Studies of the questionnaire technique have thus far failed to establish usable norms for the determination of adequate samplings.¹ Nevertheless, it is a reasonable assumption that our data reflect accurately the major trends in English curriculum and method in Illinois high schools. A large majority of counties of the state, distributed over every section of the state, are represented. The responding high schools include urban and rural communities, and industrial, residential, and agricultural areas. Approximately one third of all the schools are included in the responses. The data obtained from the High School Visitor's office, of course, are based on official reports from 100% of the schools.

Observations of Classroom Instruction

Twenty-five Illinois high schools were visited in the course of the present study. Table II will indicate the representative character of the schools visited.

The observations made during the visits can in no sense be considered a valid basis for generalizations about Illinois schools. The number of schools is too small, and the period of the visits too brief. The chief purposes of the visits were (1) to amplify somewhat the findings of the questionnaire study, and (2) to discover examples of promising practices in the teaching of English. In some instances these practices appeared to be typical of a school program; in others they represented desirable procedures in what may have been in other respects a fairly conventional and unimaginative teaching pattern.

The Preparation of the Teacher of English

According to the finds of the questionnaire study, the typical teacher of English in Illinois high schools has had four or more

1. Leonard V. Koos, *The Questionnaire in Education*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928.

Table II. DESCRIPTION OF SCHOOLS VISITED

	County	Type of Community	Enrolment
School 1	Champaign	Rural	69
School 2	Livingston	Rural	102
School 3	Ogle	Rural	104
School 4	Mason	Rural-Residential	148
School 5	McLean	Rural-Residential	176
School 6	Livingston	Rural-Residential	196
School 7	Peoria	Industrial-Residential	290
School 8	Shelby	Rural-Industrial-Residential	356
School 9	DeWitt	Industrial-Residential	433
School 10	Clay	Industrial-Residential	435
School 11	Lake	Suburban-Residential	475
School 12	Effingham	Industrial-Residential	514
School 13	Warren	Industrial-Residential	523
School 14	Franklin	Industrial	774
School 15	Franklin	Industrial	806
School 16	Cook	Suburban-Industrial	995
School 17	Rock Island	Industrial	1195
School 18	Winnebago	Urban-residential-industrial	1278
School 19	Vermilion	Urban-residential-industrial	1418
School 20	Cook	Suburban-industrial	1708
School 21	Macon	Urban-residential-industrial	1916
School 22	Cook	Suburban-residential	2658
School 23	Cook	Suburban-residential-industrial	2710
School 24	Cook	Suburban-residential-industrial	3358
School 25	Cook	Suburban-residential-industrial	3998

years of schooling beyond high school. In schools with enrolments over 500, the median number of years of schooling beyond high school enjoyed by teachers of English is five. The number of semester hours of college work in English taken by teachers ranges from a median interval of 31-35 in schools with enrolments under 200, to a median interval of 41-45 in schools with enrolments exceeding 2,000. The median intervals for courses in Education were 21-25 semester hours in the case of teachers in schools with enrolments under 200, and 26-30 semester hours in the case of teachers in schools with enrolments over 500. Obviously, the extent of the teacher's academic preparation increases with the size of the school. On the other hand, the number of years that have passed since teachers last attended school remains constant for all enrolment categories except the largest (schools with more than 2,000 pupils). For all except the largest schools, the median interval was 1-5 years since latest school attendance. In the case of the largest schools, the median interval was 6-10 years.

It is interesting to observe that the size of the school determines also, to a considerable extent, the type of institution at which teachers took their degrees. Table III reveals that teachers in the larger high schools predominantly come from the University of

Illinois and other large universities. In the case of the largest high schools, three fourths of the teachers of English received their degrees from universities other than the University of Illinois. The teachers colleges and the smaller liberal arts colleges together supplied approximately half of the teachers of English in schools with enrolments of 500 or less. Of all teachers of English in the responding high schools, roughly one fourth come from the University of Illinois, and one half from other universities.

Table III. INSTITUTIONS FROM WHICH TEACHERS OF ENGLISH RECEIVED DEGREES

(Figures indicate per cent of teachers responding)

Enrolment	The University of Illinois	Other Universities	Teachers Colleges	Private Colleges
1-200	24	20.3	29.1	26.6
201-500	27.3	32.4	21.6	18.7
501-1000	41.9	34.5	8	15.6
1001-2000	20.9	62.2	7.2	9.7
Over 2000	9.2	73.9	7.7	13.9
All Schools	23.1	48	13.9	15

An examination of the courses in English and Education taken by teachers in the course of their undergraduate and graduate work reveals the expected spread over the usual required and elective courses. Rhetoric and literature survey courses seemed to be regarded by most teachers as the most valuable courses in English that they had had. In education, the course in educational psychology appeared to be most popular.

The chief significance of the responses to this part of the questionnaire is the absence from most of the lists of courses designed to prepare teachers for meeting many of the practical problems of the English classrooms. The great majority of the courses in English were courses in the history of English, and to a lesser extent, American literature. While some courses in this category are necessary in the preparation of teachers of English, many are designed to prepare research scholars rather than teachers. Few teachers seem to have had adequate preparation, either in English or in Education, in mental hygiene and the problems of personality development, in the scientific approach to language study, in dramatics, journalism, library science, adolescent literature, contemporary adult literature, or World Literature, all of which are vital to the professional competence of teachers of English in secondary schools.

Size of school is an important factor also in the matter of years of experience which the typical teacher of English in Illinois

secondary schools has had. In the smallest enrolment category, the group of schools with 200 pupils or less, the median interval is 1-5 years of experience. In all enrolment categories between 201 and 2,000, the median interval is 11-20 years, and in schools above 2,000 enrolment the median interval is 21-30. If there is a positive relationship between teaching competence and years of experience, the larger schools clearly have the advantage. On the other hand, if there is value in frequent additions of young, recently educated teachers to the staff, the very largest schools appear to be at some disadvantage, especially in view of our figures, presented earlier in this article, which reveal the fact that teachers in the largest high schools have attended any college or university less recently than teachers in the smaller schools.

The Teaching Load of the Teacher of English

A common complaint among teachers of English is the heavy load of class and "paper" work which the teaching of English requires. According to the testimony of the teachers themselves, the total work week of teachers of English in Illinois high schools extends from 41-50 hours, the median interval in all enrolment categories. There were some respondents who asserted they spent 70, 80, or 90 hours per week, but these were exceptions. There were a considerable number who declared they work 60 or more hours per week, but these are a minority.

Class size in English classes varies from one school year to another, and tends to increase with the size of the school. The median size of English classes in each enrolment category is given in Table IV:

Table IV. MEDIAN SIZE OF ENGLISH CLASSES

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Median Size of English Class	21-25	26-30	31-35	31-35	31-35	31-35

In these medians we may have the key to many of our difficulties in the teaching of English. Research data on the effect of class size on learning language skills are still inconclusive; but the needs of individuals in language and literature vary so widely that the size of class will determine in no small measure whether the teacher can give effective aid to young people. When half the English classes in Illinois high schools contain 35 or more pupils, it is clear that our primary concern should be for the reduction of class size.

A similar observation should be made with respect to the number of classes taught per day. The median number of English classes taught per day by teachers in Illinois high schools is 5, for all enrolment categories. If teaching effectiveness depends in part on a personal knowledge of the pupil by the teacher, the conditions of teaching at the present time must materially reduce such effectiveness. Perhaps the greatest value of the "core" or integrated course running two periods a day is the reduction of the number of different daily class sessions which it makes possible, and the greater opportunity it provides the teacher to familiarize himself with the young people in his classes and to give them individual help.

Teachers of English are frequently called upon to teach courses other than English, in combination with English classes. While combination-loads are most common in the small schools, they are by no means unknown in the large schools. History, Latin, and modern foreign languages, and in the smaller schools alone, physical education, are among the subjects most frequently mentioned in the combinations. In most instances, they probably constitute a substantial factor in teacher overload.

Teachers in schools of all sizes report that they spend from 1-5 hours per week in individual counselling of pupils, and a similar period in various types of extra-curricular activities. These are, of course, median figures. Individual teachers report that they spend each afternoon after school hours and most evenings in counselling and extra-curricular activities. The types of extra-curricular activities reported by teachers include sponsorship of the school yearbook, sponsorship of the senior class and of various clubs, direction of school plays, and speech activities, presumably including interscholastic debates.

Curriculum improvement calls for careful planning, extensive library research and community consultation, and particularly the unending study of individual boys and girls. When the total teaching load is as great as the present questionnaire findings indicate, cooperative curriculum development on any significant scale becomes difficult if not impossible. The quality of language arts instruction in Illinois could be measurably improved if substantial reductions in teacher load could be accomplished.

Methods of Pupil Classification

Of all the schools responding, roughly one fourth reported that they divided their pupils on the basis of ability to do high school work. No data were obtained on the question of the methods used

in determining pupils' abilities. Intelligence and various kinds of achievement tests appear to be commonly used in the classification of pupils. Table V indicates that the larger schools showed a greater tendency toward the practice of homogeneous grouping. Obviously many of the schools in the lowest enrolment category do not face the problem of classification on the basis of ability.

Table V. PER CENT OF SCHOOLS EMPLOYING
ABILITY GROUPING

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Per cent using ability group- ing	10.9	27.3	55	52	100	27.7

It will be noted that all of the schools in the largest enrolment category employ ability grouping. However, this category is represented by only 9 high schools, and the figures for this category are less reliable than for the others.

The question whether schools should practice ability grouping depends primarily upon the educational philosophy of the school. If the school's chief concern is with the mastery of a given body of subject matter and skills, it will incline to a system of stratification and segregation on the basis of certain scholastic abilities. If the school is primarily interested in the general social development of boys and girls, and is prepared to differentiate in the choice of subject matters, skills, and activities in the light of observed needs and potentialities of individual young people, the school will generally avoid segregation.

Many classes organized for the so-called slow learner are dull and uninspiring, limited in large measure to drills on activities which have little interest for normal youth. Teachers generally seek to avoid assignments to "slow" classes. On the other hand, in some instances the materials and activities introduced into "slow" classes have more variety and contemporaneity than those found in college preparatory classes which feel the pressure of the conventional sequences. Such materials and activities are often of such a nature as to be desirable for all youth, not merely those fortunate enough to qualify for the "opportunity room."

Recent studies of pupil withdrawals from high school have revealed that poor grades and failures are responsible in large measure for the heavy "mortality" rate in high schools. It is clear that if the secondary school is to perform its full function with respect to *all* the youth of high school age, it must find a way of

meeting the personal and social needs of these "slow" learners. If it can do so best under the system of segregation, it has the responsibility of avoiding the stigma of inferiority which attaches to classification in the lower levels of the school hierarchy. It will be necessary also to overcome that self-classification by pupils which gives them the sense of defeat and the desire to flee to something outside of school in which success seems more possible of attainment.

The Content of the Program in English

The files of the High School Visitor's office reveal that 362 accredited public high schools in Illinois require 4 years of English for graduation, and 340 require 3 years. It has been found, however, that schools requiring only 3 years of English for graduation usually offer numerous English electives in the fourth year, and that most fourth year students elect one of these courses. It appears that English still commands the major share of curricular time in Illinois secondary schools. What is the nature of the content of the English program?

Teachers were asked to estimate the relative amount of time devoted to the various phases of language communication. Their responses indicated no significant differences among schools in the various enrolment categories. For all schools responding, the median estimates indicated that 20% of the time is devoted to writing, 10% to speaking, 30% to grammar, 40% to literature, and 10% to listening. These percentages total more than 100%, but they represent a summary of the figures reported by teachers.

These estimates cannot, of course, be regarded as accurate reports of the distribution of time actually observed in English classrooms. They are probably rather the teachers' beliefs as to what constitutes a proper emphasis on each of the phases of English. For example, our visits to classrooms and conferences with teachers did not corroborate the estimate of teachers, in schools of all sizes, that 10% of all English time is devoted to actual instruction in listening. Probably far less than 10% of the time is devoted to direct instruction in listening, and far more to unguided experiences in listening; 10% probably represents most teachers' opinion as to the relative importance of this phase of English instruction.

Similar reservations should be made with respect to the responses on the teaching of grammar. Grammar means many different things to different teachers. In all likelihood, the term *grammar* as used by teachers includes all independent study of language form and structure and all usage drills. Literature proba-

bly includes any class activities designed to stimulate and guide free reading in and out of class.

Nevertheless, it may fairly be assumed that the general emphasis in English classes corresponds roughly to the estimates reported by these hundreds of Illinois teachers of English. (The actual numbers of teachers responding on each phase of English varied; 942 teachers in all responded to the questionnaire, and of these from 89% to 99% reported estimates on the respective items.) Except for the item of listening, the visits to schools corroborated the findings of the questionnaire.

It is clear, for example, that more time is devoted to study *about* language than to actual experience in either writing or speaking under guidance. It may be held that a certain amount of systematic instruction about the structure of language is necessary. The great weight of evidence, however, supports the position that language is learned through guided, motivated use of language and through a direct attack upon the individual's current problems in speaking and writing. Instead of devoting 60% or more of the total program in written communication to the study of grammar and usage drills, teachers will make far more economical and effective use of their time if they will set the stage for genuinely purposeful communication in speaking and writing of all kinds and if they will find opportunities for providing constructive individual guidance.

The argument that a considerable amount of formal grammar must be taught to meet the requirements of rhetoric courses in colleges and universities does not appear to be supported by the facts. Qualifying and classifying examinations in colleges and universities generally call for the ability to write a literate, coherent composition and the ability to recognize common violations of good usage. They do not generally call for a knowledge of grammatical terminology or for sentence analysis as such. At the University of Illinois, for example, entering students who exhibit ability to write an acceptable theme and to recognize common errors of usage are admitted to the standard Rhetoric course. Those with superior writing ability are exempted from this course and are given credit for it. The criterion is the ability to use English—not the procedure by which this ability was developed. Inasmuch as theoretical grammar, however valuable as a subject of study in itself it may be, does not materially contribute to the ability to speak or write, teachers of English will make more effective use of their time and energy by providing actual experience in speaking and writing under guidance.

Moreover, in view of the relatively greater importance of spoken English in everyday life, 10% of the total time, which is devoted to speech, seems inadequate for instruction in this area. Probably the tendency to increase the emphasis upon spoken English by adding courses in speech or by devoting certain days of the week to "speech" work—a tendency observed in a number of high schools—is not the most satisfactory solution to the problem. Spoken English may be taught more naturally in relation to literature and other subject matter which can supply occasion, motive, and substance for the language activity. For this reason, too, the practice still current of alternating semesters or 6-week periods of composition and literature should be abandoned in favor of a more integrated plan.

A revised distribution of effort will result from the concept of shared experience, of language as the communication of meaning, embodying all phases of English—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Under such a concept, language form is not ignored, but it is restored to its rightful place as a means to an end. The problem of conveying meanings accurately and persuasively, and of using language to create more wholesome social relationships and to promote the many-sided development of individuals will become central to the teaching of English. English will then be not a mere service agency to the "content" fields, but a basic field of educational endeavor in its own right; not a handmaiden but a mistress.

Teachers in schools of all enrolment categories except those of the 501-1000 class reported, as a median estimate, that approximately 40% of the English time is devoted to the teaching of literature. The one exception among the groups of schools reported 50% of the time devoted to literature. The questionnaire study revealed no information as to the nature of the literature content. Visits to schools, however, suggested that the literature content is determined in large part by the commercial anthologies, most of which carry the conventional content, including *Silas Marner*, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Julius Caesar*, and the other familiar classics.

There seems little reason to continue the use of these classics as subject matter for all pupils in English classes. Many boys and girls leave high school before graduation because the work of the school bears so little relation to their needs and abilities. Certainly these and many other English, American, and world classics should be read and discussed by many high school students. However, it is clear that they are remote from the lives and purposes of many

other students. Reading and literature materials should serve very concrete purposes in the lives of American youth—purposes relating to the personal and social needs of young people. It is unlikely that any given selection of literary works, even those hallowed by generations of use in high school classes, should necessarily be equally useful in meeting all the varied needs of high school students.

The wide range of reading ability in the average high school class—according to some reports, as much as ten grades—would normally require the conclusion that the use of any single title for class study is undesirable. Certainly when a single title is used, it should be amply supplemented by numerous other titles related to the same general theme and selected in terms of a wide range of reading difficulty—the prevailing practice in English classes appears to be the use of a single title for class study, supplemented by individual free reading. Since a greater amount of class time is devoted to the study of a single literary classic, a large number of pupils find class study of English and American literature a frustrating experience.

The Use of the Course of Study

According to the responses of both administrators and teachers of English, courses of study in English tend to be in greater use in larger schools than in smaller. Table VI indicates the percentages

Table VI. SCHOOLS HAVING COURSES OF STUDY
IN ENGLISH

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Per cent reporting use of course of study	13.4	40	65	88	100	36.5

as reported by high school principals. Most of the courses of study were reported to have been revised within the last two years.

Teachers of English were asked also to what extent they followed the course of study, if one existed in their school. Table VII indicates the responses of the teachers to this question.

It is encouraging to note that only a very small per cent of teachers assert that they follow the course of study very closely. Clearly no course of study can make adequate provision for all class and individual differences, and it is a tribute to teachers that they recognize the need to adapt content and procedures to these differences.

Table VII. THE USE OF COURSES OF STUDY
IN ENGLISH

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Per cent of teachers reporting having a course of study	39	53.8	71.4	84.8	97.6	72.1
Per cent reporting that they follow course very closely	8.9	4.1	4.3	8.6	23.9	10.2
Per cent reporting that they follow course fairly closely	18.5	21.4	28.2	33.6	45.9	29.8
Per cent reporting that they use course as a general guide	11.6	27.1	37.5	33.6	26.4	28
Per cent reporting non-use of course	0	0	1.4	0	1.4	.4
Per cent of respondents not reporting	0	1.2	0	9	0	3.7

A great many schools do not use any course of study in English. It is possible that in a few cases some form of cooperative curriculum planning, or a variety of resource units, is employed as a substitute for a course of study. It is probable, however, that in a great many more instances a textbook constitutes the course of study. Perhaps a textbook is better than no plan at all, but it is in itself no adequate substitute for a clear statement of educational objectives and of well-considered educational planning by the teacher.

The new Chicago course for English 8 (November, 1948) is an example of the use of a series of resource units in the place of the more conventional "course of study." These resource units are intended to serve as a basis for the teaching units which each teacher will make in cooperation with pupils. They provide certain basic experiences for all pupils, and suggest additional activities which may be appropriate for "slow" pupils, as well as others which may challenge the superior pupils.

The Use of the Textbook and Other Reading Materials

While in the majority of schools visited teachers used uniform composition textbooks and literary anthologies, most of them appeared to use some discretion in the omission of certain sections that seemed unsuitable for a given class, and the inclusion of some materials and activities not found in the textbook. In one instance, the teachers dispersed with the anthology entirely and relied exclusively on a well-stocked library for a diversity of reading materials to meet the individual needs of readers. In another school a course called "Contemporary Culture" was based entirely upon current non-textbook materials.

In certain schools such magazines as *Reader's Digest*, *Cavalcade*, *Scholastic*, and *Coronet* are used as textbooks through a mass subscription arrangement. *Life*, *Time*, and one or two other popular, mass magazines are prominent on library and classroom tables.

The ubiquity of these periodicals in schools, particularly those which have a huge circulation among adults, raises the question to what extent schools should serve as subscription agencies for these mass molders of public opinion, which represent usually but a single interpretation of public affairs. It is reasonable to inquire whether the school does not rather have the obligation to introduce young people to the many excellent magazines of limited circulation (there are hundreds of such magazines) which represent a wide diversity of viewpoints on public affairs, and which provide satisfaction for many interests not adequately served in the mass media, magazines which deal objectively with the contributions of many culture groups in America, with sports and hobbies, health, medicine and science, travel, current events, occupations, fashion, and similar themes. Fiction on a level somewhat higher than that purveyed by the "slicks" is available in many limited-circulation periodicals. It would probably be preferable for each pupil in a class to subscribe to a different magazine than for everyone to subscribe for the same one, and the resultant interchange would lend excitement and vitality to the English class.

The Distribution of Time

In his excellent and forward-looking report on the *Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools*, Dr. James Fleming Hosis recommended the separation of the so-called "practical" English from the "literary" English by teaching these in alternate ten-week periods or semester courses. The purpose was not to divorce reading from writing, but to guarantee adequate emphasis upon each phase of English work. Since the time of this admirable report,

which is still well in advance of typical practices in English classes today, prevailing thought among leading teachers of English has favored the integrated teaching of the four major facets of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, but with careful pre-planning to provide for a well-balanced program. The sharp distinction between the "practical" and the "literary" has likewise tended to disappear in the intervening years.

A considerable number of respondents in the current study failed to reply to the question regarding the division of time. Table VIII summarizes the responses that were made to this question.

Table VIII. ORGANIZATION OF LITERATURE
AND COMPOSITION

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Per cent of schools dividing lit. and comp. in separate time period	6.7	21.8	20	48	4	17.4
Per cent of schools dividing lit. and comp. in separate semesters	2.5	12.7	20	20	6	8.3
Per cent of schools integrating lit. and comp.	5	14.5	40	24	16	14.8

It will be observed that, while the percentage of responses is far too low to be conclusive, a considerable number of schools still make the separation between literature and composition, perhaps in part as a result of the influence of the Hosis report. Perhaps this percentage will decline as the current trend toward integration, reflected in the present work of the curriculum commission of the National Council of Teachers of English, becomes increasingly felt in the schools.

Providing for Individual Differences

Several references have been made earlier in this report to the need for provision for individual differences. There was abundant evidence in the schools visited that schools are aware of the problem. The tendency to group pupils on the basis of reading ability, the establishment of remedial reading classes, and the provision of

electives in the junior and senior years are illustrative of the effort to adapt the English program to the differing needs of pupils.

Within classes, however, examples of effective differentiation were relatively rare. One teacher employed the individual contract method in the teaching of *Julius Caesar*, an example of individualization within fairly severe limits. Another teacher permitted pupils to work on those aspects of grammar which caused them most difficulty. A teacher of American literature reported that in a unit on American Documents each student had made a notebook based on a theme which especially interested him (such as the idea of freedom as expressed in poetry) and that during a unit on magazines she had permitted each student to select a magazine for a report to the class. In most schools the free reading program provided a wide range of choice in the selection of books to read.

Teacher-Pupil Planning

Recent emphasis upon pupil participation in the planning of the work of the class stems from a growing realization that experience in group planning not only increases the effectiveness of the learning process, but contributes measurably to the maturity of high school youth. Some evidence that this emphasis has penetrated high school classrooms was observed during the visits. One class in junior English set up its own standards for discussions and oral reports—apparently with generous aid from the teacher. Another class in junior English had delegated to student chairmen the responsibility of evaluating the quality of the class discussions. One teacher divided her class into small groups and permitted each group to decide whether it wished to work on the novel, biography, poetry, or some other literary type. Another class, inspired by the Freedom Train, began by studying American documents, and then decided to study Illinois writers. The class was divided into committees, each of which chose one writer for special examination. In a number of instances students were encouraged to select their own methods of reporting to the class. These are modest beginnings, but they give evidence of a promising trend.

Types of Expressional Activities

One of the marks of a superior curriculum in communications is the stimulation of a wide variety of highly motivated, purposeful expressional activities, both in speaking and writing. Such activities arise out of a genuine need for communication, and involve a real, not a contrived, audience situation. Over an extended period they represent a reasonable balance among such diversified types

of communication as floor talks, panels, group discussion, speaking into a microphone, informal conversation, letter-writing, report writing, the writing of minutes, and what is commonly called free or "creative" writing.

In the classrooms observed, a large portion of the written work consisted of book reports, paragraph writing, longer themes on topics suggested by teachers, some "creative" writing, letters written for the teacher, and compositions written in connection with literature studied in class (character sketches, opinions on selections read, written reports on library research, and the like). Such activities will vary widely in their value to the student, but in many instances they probably account for the well-known dislike of many high school students for theme writing. The inherent purposelessness of such activities is inevitable in a curriculum organization which is based upon skills instead of real problems of living.

Little evidence of the modern emphasis upon semantics was discovered during the visits to schools. Vocabulary study consisted to a large extent of dictionary work and the acquisition of new words. Understanding of the multiple and shifting use of words, and of the distinction between the symbol and the reality it represents did not appear to be a conscious objective of most teachers of English. Without doubt some incidental work on word meanings in a variety of contexts is undertaken in many English classes, but so far as our observation went the semantics movement has not yet penetrated to the majority of classrooms.

A similar situation was found with respect to spoken English. The most common oral activity was the oral book report, which usually consisted of a digest of the plot of the book read. Oral reports on magazine articles read, reports of library research, and speeches on assigned topics (chiefly hobby talks) were among the other common types of spoken communication observed in the 25 schools.

Class discussions were in the main summaries and analyses of literary selections studied. Occasionally the class digressed to discuss such general themes as family relations, world peace efforts, and other topics of current interest. Panel discussions were conducted in some of the classrooms. A "socialized recitation" was observed in one class. This discussion followed the rather formalized routine devised for this procedure fifteen or twenty years ago: the teacher issued questions to be used as a guide in the reading of a literary selection, and in the class period the students asked each other the questions and criticized each other's answers.

The types of spoken communication observed in the 25 schools

add up to a fair variety, but except in rare instances it appeared that teachers had not taken full advantage of their opportunities to plan a rich variety of highly motivated activities in the area of spoken communication. The techniques of group discussion, so vital to life in a democratic society, were particularly undeveloped in the majority of classes.

The exceptions noted included two teachers who made effective use of small group discussions. One organized book discussion groups in which students shared their book experiences. Another divided the class into small groups for the discussion of paragraphs selected from a previous day's writing.

Organization of the Literature Curriculum

The organization of the curriculum in literature in almost every school visited is determined by the literary anthology employed as a basis for instruction. The prevailing organization is by types, or by chronology, or by a combination of both. The uses of literature in helping young people to solve personal problems or gain insight into human motivation were usually incidental to the mastery of content. As the newer anthologies increasingly adopt the more functional type of organization, classroom practices will no doubt change. Certain teachers are already experimenting with experience units as a plan of organization for the work in literature.

The growing realization of the inadequacy of the traditional organization of literature was noted in the practices of several teachers who used the literary selections in the anthologies to stimulate discussion of significant issues. Longfellow's "The Arsenal at Springfield" served as the basis for a discussion of the world's great need for peace and international understanding. A teacher of a class in junior English reported that her class used magazine articles as a basis for a discussion of race prejudice and similar problems. Another teacher introduced in her sophomore class a unit on Russian literature as a means of understanding more clearly some of the international conflicts our nation faces. "The Cotter's Saturday Night" served as a springboard for the discussion of recreational problems of young people. In another instance, however, a teacher's personal interests were reflected in the class study of snow crystals, suggested by Whittier's "Snowbound." A freshman class discussed the question, "What is success in life?," on the basis of a variety of books read outside of class. Issues suggested by fictional problems of love and marriage are of course among the more common topics of discussion in classes where literature is studied for its personal values rather than mere recall of content.

Courtesy, codes of personal ethics, vocations, social responsibility, self-denial, and competition are other themes that appear frequently in the earnest discussions of young people in the literature classes visited. One of the dangers in many of these discussions is a certain degree of teacher dominance. Often the temptation for the teacher to do too much of the talking is difficult to resist. Moreover, when the objective is "character building," as professed in a number of the schools, the influence of the teacher's or the school's conception of what good character is may discourage full and honest development of the students' own real growing concepts of good character.

The Teaching of World Literature

In our day when the attention of all thoughtful people is fixed upon the international scene, the high school bears a special responsibility for the development of world-wide sympathies and the understanding of peoples of all nations. The teaching of World Literature can be a valuable instrument in the development of world-mindedness.

Administrators were asked in the questionnaire what instruction was being given in the area of world literature. Approximately one-third of the respondents reported that they taught one or more units on the literature of other nations. Another third reported that books about other nations and books by writers of other nations were included in pupils' free reading. Less than 10% of all schools offer an elective course in World Literature, although if we omit consideration of schools having enrolments of 200 or less (schools which can offer few if any electives), the percentage rises to approximately one fourth of all responding schools in the higher enrolment categories. A very few schools require a course in World Literature.

The mere teaching of a unit or course in World Literature does not, obviously, assure the development of constructive, sympathetic attitudes toward the world community, or provide a knowledge of the personal and social problems which are faced by human beings in other parts of the world. Analyzing a novel by Tolstoy or a poem by Tagore has no more value than dissecting *Vanity Fair* or *The Scarlet Letter*. The judicious selection of literary products from other lands and other ages, and a continued emphasis upon the human problems and conflicts of other peoples and the universality of joy, grief, remorse, failure, and aspiration are essential to the achievement of the purposes of World Literature in secondary schools.

The School Library

Central to a vigorous, modern program in the teaching of English is an excellent school library. Elaborate data concerning Illinois high school libraries were secured from the High School Visitor's Office and summarized. A few of the figures so obtained are given here.

Table IX. NUMBER OF TITLES IN ILLINOIS HIGH SCHOOL LIBRARIES (EXCLUSIVE OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS AND DUPLICATES)

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Number of book titles (median in- tervals)	1000- 2000	2001- 3000	4000- 5000	5001- 6000	6001- 7000	1001- 2000

It would appear from these figures that, while pupils in the larger schools have access to a greater variety of titles than do those in the smaller schools, the number of titles per pupil declines in proportion to the size of the school. Opportunity for full utilization of the library therefore becomes less as the school grows larger.

From this evidence and from visits to numerous high schools throughout the state the present writers conclude that there is need for a re-thinking of the role of the library in the secondary school. Classroom libraries, insofar as they exist at all, generally consist of a few sets of standard textbooks and anthologies. The central library is too small, except in some of the smaller schools, to accommodate more than a very small fraction of the pupils who have free periods, so that admission to the library must be by special passes issued by study hall supervisors. The research and free reading that should be in progress constantly by the entire school population is tragically limited by the present inadequate book and plant facilities. It is small wonder that reference librarians in school and public libraries report that only a minute percentage of high school youth customarily use the *Reader's Guide* or other reference materials. Perhaps our failure to develop keen and permanent interests in reading on the part of so large a section of the high school population is traceable to the inadequacy of library facilities.

One of the questions addressed, during February, 1949, to teachers of English in a school system participating in a curriculum development program was, "Do you believe the library in your high school is adequate to meet the needs of the new curriculum you

are planning?" The overwhelming response was in the negative. The libraries in the secondary schools of this community were not unlike those in most secondary schools visited. There are many factors that make curriculum improvement difficult, but library development is certainly one of the most important. Overall curriculum planning should include a coordinated attack upon the general school program, including plant and library development.

The Role of the Librarian

A certain degree of cooperation between the librarian and the teacher of English was noted in many of the schools visited. Librarians and teachers frequently plan the unit on library use together. Librarians are frequently invited into English classes to discuss the desirability of securing a card in the public library.

In most instances, however, there is need for much closer coordination between the work of the librarian and that of the teacher of English. Librarians are usually so overworked, so lacking in assistance, so absorbed in the mechanics of library management, that they have no time to visit classes and to cooperate in securing not only books but many other kinds of teaching materials needed in connection with units of work. The librarian and the teacher of English should be allies. They should be planning constantly for the work of classes and for individual guidance in reading.

Remedial Reading in Illinois High Schools

A large majority of Illinois high schools recognize the existence of individual differences in reading ability to the extent of making provision for some kind of remedial reading instruction. Table X indicates the methods used to make such provision. It will be noted that the high schools having enrolments over 1000 tend to employ a special teacher or teachers for remedial reading (in some schools called "adjustment teachers"), while high schools having enrolments under 1000 tend to assign the task of remedial reading instruction to the teachers of English.

No data were obtained to determine methods used in the identification of pupils who require remedial reading instruction. Random observation of school practices would suggest, however, that the prevailing method is to segregate for special instruction all pupils whose reading scores fall significantly below the 9th grade level.

The planning of an effective remedial reading program calls first of all for the formulation of defensible criteria of reading retardation. A pupil whose reading ability has kept pace with his

Table X. METHODS OF PROVIDING REMEDIAL READING INSTRUCTION

Enroiment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Per cent of respondents replying	65.6	70.9	80	86	100	72.8
Per cent as- signing remedial rdg. to all teachers	9.7	23.1	6.3	4.2	11.1	7.9
Per cent as- signing remedial rdg. to Eng. teachers	89.7	66.6	68.7	29.2	11.1	50.2
Per cent em- ploying special teacher	2.6	10.3	25	66.6	77.8	14.4

general maturation and his mental ability should in general not be regarded as a subject for remedial reading instruction. Some pupils whose reading ability may be above the average of their class may require remedial instruction. All pupils will require some systematic guidance in reading in a properly differentiated instructional program. Only those pupils who for some reason persistently fail to read at the level of their capacity should be regarded as remedial cases.

For such individuals the larger schools and school systems should provide more than a remedial or "adjustment" teacher. A reading or psychological clinic, staffed with a medical consultant, a social worker, a psychiatrist, a psychometrist, a psychologist, and a reading specialist, and fully equipped with suitable reading materials, audiometer, visual testing apparatus, and other essential clinical appurtenances, should be a part of every school system large enough to provide a sufficient number of remedial cases. In view of the long period that has elapsed since schools first became acutely aware of the reading problem, the present dearth of adequate educational clinics in Illinois schools is astonishing.

High schools which permit classes to become too large, which fail to provide adequate classroom libraries, which fail to adapt curriculum practices to the needs of individual learners, cannot expect to solve their reading problems by merely adding a remedial or "adjustment" teacher, or even a complete educational clinic. For the majority of boys and girls, good classroom teaching, under conditions which make individual assistance possible, remains the key to the prevention of reading retardation.

Provisions for Free Reading

The term "free reading" is here used to include all outside reading other than textbook reading. Most of the schools visited require the reading of three or four books outside of class. Usually these must include one biography, one book of essays, and one book of description or travel. Some schools require a certain number of "points" for outside reading. One school requires 1,000 pages per semester. In a few instances an effort was made to relate outside reading to units under study in class.

It is perhaps not profitable to examine the question whether required outside reading will achieve the desired result of a strong, continuing interest in voluntary reading. Certainly the required minimum is modest enough, although most adults, including many teachers, do not read as many as eight books a year. The important question is the extent to which not only the English class, but all the classes of the secondary school focus upon the problem of arousing strong interests in reading. In this process the major devices must be of a persuasive, not a coercive character if continuing interests are to be aroused. Students in all classes should be surrounded by a great wealth of materials—books, magazines, pamphlets, pictures, and other stimuli to reading. Abundant use of films and records is indicated. Dramatizations and oral reading of stories in class, cumulative records of books read, kept by the young people themselves, and frequent oral exchange of reading experiences should be encouraged. Extended periods of silent reading of books in class, after adequate preparation through the discussion of books and individual interviews with students concerning their reading, are essential, particularly in communities where home conditions are not conducive to quiet reading over extended periods.

In one of the schools visited, a teacher initiated a Let's Read Week, during which students made illustrative posters to advertise the books they especially liked. Another teacher showed her students the film, *Reading for Pleasure and Profit*, and then constructed a chart on which the different types of books read by students were recorded in different colors. This device was intended to aid students in maintaining a reasonable balance among the books they selected to read. "Sales talks" by teachers and students on the subject of books are arranged in a number of English classes. One teacher asked her students to introduce to the class some famous persons about whom they had read, along with appropriate details concerning their characteristics and achievements. These and other methods illustrate frequently used

procedures designed to arouse genuine interests in the reading of desirable books.

Teaching Critical Reading

An effort was made during the visits to English classes to discover the extent to which the current interest in the subject of critical reading has been reflected in actual school practices. Many of the teachers asserted that they do try to develop the ability to read critically. The following comments illustrate the attitudes of many teachers toward this problem: "Trying to get students to read critically is hard and discouraging, but a goal worth keeping in mind. Sometimes students do 'come through,' and it's fun watching them learn to think. I believe they like to express their own ideas, but that they've never had a chance to do it before, and consequently are slow in catching on." A teacher reminded her class, "Remember last week we said it was time for us to become critical readers, to learn to separate important from unimportant facts." Another remarked, "I don't want my students to agree with everything they read." One teacher's concept of critical reading was expressed in her comment that when she sees a fallacy in an author's reasoning she tries to make her class see it too.

It is clear that while the objective of critical reading is present in the minds of teachers and curriculum makers (one course of study, at least, makes specific reference to it), very little has been done to develop specific and systematic means of attaining it. Here is perhaps one of the greatest tasks before the teacher of English in our democracy.

Audio-Visual Aids in Illinois High Schools

Most schools responding to the questionnaires reported having some kind of audio-visual aids equipment. Table XI summarizes the responses to the question concerning such equipment. The figures do not provide a clue as to the adequacy of the equipment, either as to quality or number in relation to total enrolment. Visits to high school English classes provided little evidence of extensive use of visual aids, although in conferences with teachers it was apparent that the use of literary films and recordings is growing. It would seem that a good collection of films and recordings and a system making equipment easily available to teachers have become an essential feature of a modern, enriched program in English. The judicious and carefully planned use of audio-visual aids is one obvious way in which English programs in many Illinois secondary schools can be improved.

Table XI. AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT
(Figures represent per cent of total reporting)

Enrolment	1-200	201-500	501-1000	1001-2000	Over 2000	All Schools
Schools report- ing having projectors	90.3	100	97.6	97.6	100	94.8
Schools report- ing having pro- jection rooms	40.4	59.3	88.1	66.7	91.9	50.8
Schools report- ing having radios	88.1	85.4	92.9	85.7	97.3	88.3
Schools report- ing having sound recorders	18.8	54.1	83.3	80.9	83.8	35.2
Schools report- ing having phonographs	70.6	74.8	76.2	76.2	64.9	68.2

Studying the Media of Mass Communication

In a day when a single magazine is read by as many as 25,000,000 people, and public opinion on many questions can be shaped by a handful of communication agencies, the study of the media of mass communication assumes an unprecedented importance. To what extent are the classes in English, concerned as they are with the problem of communication, assuming this responsibility?

Among the schools visited only a small minority give attention to the study of radio, photoplay, newspapers, and magazines. In those instances in which attention is given to these media, the units are of relatively brief duration. One typical high school allots fifteen days to both the magazine and the newspaper. In another school the study of radio and photoplay is optional with the teacher. The chief objection raised by teachers to such units is the lack of suitable materials for teaching in these areas. Daytime radio programs represent only a limited type of radio offerings, so that class listening is alleged to be unsatisfactory. The chief difficulty seems to be a lack of good reading materials at the high school level, and the lack of adequate knowledge on the part of teachers with respect to the facts about the media of mass communication. Curriculum making and supervision in the field of secondary school English apparently need to be directed more systematically toward the improvement of teaching in this field. The pre-service education of teachers of English should include work on this subject as well as the history of English and American literature.

Concluding Remarks

The data obtained in the present study indicate that the teaching of English in Illinois ranges from very superior to mediocre. Generalizations about any phase of English instruction in this state are difficult to make. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that while very definite progress has been made in the teaching of English, a great deal must still be done in Illinois secondary schools to adapt the program to the urgent needs of the great majority of young people in our communities.

The writers hope that what is here reported as prevailing practice will not be regarded as standard practice, and therefore acceptable practice. Teachers of English who wish to assume their full responsibilities must be well in advance of prevailing practices. Administrators can help by providing in each high school a good professional library for teachers of English; by making funds available for adequate central and classroom libraries, films, records, and other equipment; by lightening the teacher load and setting some teachers free for part of the time to work on curriculum problems; and by encouraging teachers to attend professional meetings, to discuss professional problems in their own meetings, and to avail themselves of other means of professional growth.

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SPRING EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

All members are invited to attend the spring board meeting starting at 9:30 a.m. May 7, in the Penthouse of the Hotel Chicagoan in Chicago. Write to Mrs. Zada Templeton, 421 S. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park, if you plan to attend the meeting and wish luncheon reservations.

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